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October 4, 2004

Dr. Philip E. Austin, President
University of Connecticut
Storrs, CT 06269-0001

Dear Dr. Austin:

As you are doubtless aware, Section 489 of the Higher Education Act Amendments of 1998 generally requires colleges and universities to promote American democracy by making a good-faith effort to distribute voter-registration materials to their students prior to elections. Given that many of your students will be eligible to vote for the first time while at your institution, I would urge you to review your voter-registration procedures and investigate if they should be enhanced to better serve your students prior to the next election.

By requiring institutions of higher learning to obtain voter-registration forms and make them widely available to their students, the intent of the legislation was to instill in new young voters a habit of civic participation that will serve them for a lifetime and strengthen our tradition of self-government.

Sadly, it appears that some institutions may not make every effort to advance the goal Congress established in Section 489. A recent survey conducted by Professor David King of Harvard University and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* suggests that while many colleges and universities devote substantial attention to the law and want to enable students to register and vote, some institutions fail to reach their potential in this regard, and others ignore the requirement altogether.

As the senior Democrat on the House committee that oversees federal election law, I urge you to observe the requirements of Section 489 and take every reasonable step to make it easier for the potential voters of today, and the leaders of tomorrow, on your campus to participate in American democracy. Your efforts will help not only your

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institutions, but our entire country. I am attaching two recent articles for your review: "Many Colleges Fall Short on Registering Student Voters," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, (Sept. 17, 2004), and "Barriers to Student Voting," *New York Times*, (Sept. 28, 2004).

If I can assist you in your effort in any way, please do not hesitate to let me know. I look forward to working with you on this and other matters of common concern. With kindest regards, I remain

Sincerely yours,



JOHN B. LARSON
Ranking Minority Member

JBL/mh
Enclosures